

# The Folk-Schools of Denmark

To-day Denmark Claims to be the Richest Country in the World, in Proportion to its Population. The Cause of it all Lies in the Private-Schools

By J. W. MACMILLAN.

The change which has taken place in Denmark since 1864 is so startling that all other peoples might well heed the lesson. In that year she was in the lowest depths. She had just lost one of her fairest provinces to Germany. She was loaded with an enormous debt. The mass of the people were wretchedly poor, and, with the land of the kingdom held by a comparative few, economically defenceless. Both internal and external trade were pitifully small. The spirit of the country seemed broken; dejection and complaining were everywhere.

To-day Denmark claims to be the richest country in the world, in proportion to its population. It is a hive of healthful and profitable activity. It leads the world in its agricultural industries. Its morbidity and mortality statistics are the envy of other lands. The people have gained the power in the government, and the large holdings are being purchased in small farms by working farmers, who cultivate them with an unrivalled skill.

The cause of it all lies in the folk-schools founded by Bishop Grundtvig. And, like many other of the wonders of human life, this material prosperity is rather an adjunct than the direct result of his labors. His object, as befitted his profession, was spiritual rather than material. But so skilfully did he accomplish his purpose of making the people of his nation realize the higher values of human character, that these lesser things of material success have come along incidentally. For once it appears to have been true that the meek inherited the earth.

As was to have been expected a purpose so radical and novel excited opposition on all sides. The educational authorities fought him because his educational principles ran counter to classicism. The government opposed because he implicitly condemned the existing public schools. All the bureaucracy was indignant at the notion of a new and disturbing movement. And, finally, the well-to-do generally opposed him on the accustomed ground that it was best to let well enough alone. They had enough, why should there be any change?

Nevertheless he persevered and succeeded. He reached the hearts of the common people with his message of self-help. He insisted that none could save them but themselves. Not the government, not the church, not the rich could be the almoners of freedom and power. Charity was to be spurned as a force of degenerative character. They must make and support and attend and use their own system of education. And that education must be spiritual and inspirational. What they learned was not the important thing, but what they became.

In due time his folk-schools began to appear. There are now eighty of them, with about 7,000 pupils. They are all private schools, some of them supported by individuals, some by associations of individuals. Latterly they have been receiving grants from the government, but the control is jealously guarded from any possible bureaucratic influence. The last thing they want is to be standardized.

These schools are attended by both men and women, mostly between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one, though many much older also attend. The school-year lasts the entire twelve months. The attendance fills the capacity of the schools except during the busy months of seeding and harvest. Besides the regular three-years' course there are special short courses in summer for those unable or unwilling to take the entire course of education.

The schools are farms, where real farming is carried on. Nevertheless the technical part of the training is considered quite incidental. Life is largely in the open air. There are no examinations, few text-books, scarcely any memoriter exercises. No emphasis is put on the intellectual side of education, but the physical, the emotional, and the purposive faculties are cultivated. The pupils learn to work, to think, to speak, to decide, to trust each other, and to co-operate with each other. A typical day's programme will show better than anything else the methods adopted, though it is to be remembered that, as there is no standardization, the different schools vary widely in their methods. For five days in the week, from Monday to Friday, the nature of the work is as follows:

7 to 8—Barn work; engine work; dairy work; shower bath.

8 to 9—Breakfast; Bible history; sacred songs; national songs; invocations.

9 to 10—Teaching and discussion on accounting; land measurement; calculation; drawing; science.

10 to 11—Teaching and discussion on national history; heroes; civics; government; patriotic songs; speaking.

11 to 12—Drill; tramping; gymnastics; games; sports; social songs; physical culture; open country virtues; declamation.

12 to 12.30—Barn work; engine work; power work; dairy work.

12.30 to 2.—Dinner, music, recreation.

2 to 3—Teaching and discussion on character; philosophy; science; government; history; agriculture; horticulture essays; recounting.

3 to 4—Teaching and discussion on books and literature; speaking; debate; open country songs.

4 to 5—Recreation, gymnastics; music; games; the open country; shooting; riding; driving; autoing.

5 to 6—Engine work; water system sanitation; barn work; dairy; grains; fodder; silo.

7.30 to 8.30—Teaching and discussion on character; co-operation; civics; government; essays; declamation; songs.

On Saturday afternoon there is a holiday. On Sunday the morning is given to religious services, and the afternoon to teaching and discussion on morals interspersed with singing of hymns and sacred music.

It will be readily seen that such a programme is meant to supply a choice of subjects on each separate day, and thus further protect the school against the deadly monotony of standardization which is common in public schools.

It is also evident that there is a strong religious flavor in the education, without any ecclesiasticism. There is much patriotism, but no partyism. There is technical education, but it is subordinated to the development of the higher nature of the individual.

Since these folk-schools conquered Denmark they have completely changed the temper and form of the public school education supplied by the government.

## Comments on Current Commerce

By E. S. BATES.

### GRAIN TRADING AND BREAD PRICES.

The Grain Commission recently appointed by the Federal Government to control the grain trading of this country for the duration of the war held a session in Montreal last week, and heard representatives of the flour milling industry on the subject of trading in wheat options, and fixing prices. The millers advocated that either of these methods be put into effect at once in order to protect their industry as regards financing and selling. Trading in options has been suspended since the appointment of the Commission. The millers recommend that if trading in options were continued, speculation should be restricted to recognized grain dealers, and no business should be taken from such speculators as young men and women clerks, as it was reported had been done on the Winnipeg Grain Exchange. If there were to be fixed prices there should be either a flat price for each grade or maximum and minimum prices for each grade, the same prices to prevail by agreement both in the United States and Canada. Should the maximum and minimum system be adopted there should not be more than five cents a bushel difference between the two. It was suggested that a fair maximum for number one Northern would be \$1.75 per bushel.

Members of the Montreal Corn Exchange intimated that they would prefer to buy their coarse grains in the open market in Winnipeg if cars could be guaranteed, but if the Commission wished all buying to be made through a Bureau appointed by itself the Corn Exchange members would work harmoniously with the Commission, the Commission to guarantee cartage. Trading in options was most desirable, but should be restricted to bona fide grain merchants—farmers to be allowed to sell in the option market only their own crops.

Representation was also made of the price at which

Formerly these public schools were much like those of our own country, replete with text-books, given in memory exercises, and with a constant eye to examinations. The content of the instruction, too, was the same qualified classicism which rules in Canada. Now the public schools of Denmark are sharply divided into city schools and country schools. Each of these trains its pupils for life in the environment which surrounds them. The city child is led to understand and appreciate the city, and his country cousin is taught to enjoy and love life on a farm. Of the social consequences of such teaching in the rural schools it is impossible to speak too highly.

### RESULTS.

Another result of the formation and popularization of the folk-schools has been the establishment of technical agricultural schools. These are of several kinds. There are the agricultural colleges with attendant schools of domestic science, such as our own Macdonald and Guelph institutions. Besides there is a smaller school with shorter courses for men on small farms.

Still another consequence of the folk-school movement has been that the common people have assumed charge of the government. In former days it was as in many other countries: the people had votes, but by means of partyism, and the influence of rich and powerful interests, the concerns of the common man provoked little legislative action. Now the Danish parliament consists of members of the great working classes of the nation. The legislation naturally has become of a broadly human character. The graduates of the folk-schools are not revolutionists, but intelligent and judicious citizens. I have already mentioned the effect on land-holdings, with its gradual substitution of independent ownership by the actual farmers for a system of large estates let to tenants.

In conclusion, let me point out that one of the vexed problems of technical education is met by these folk-schools. For the peril of technical education is that it may mechanize the labor class. It may make a man still more of a "hand" than his father. A finer machine, doubtless, but more certainly a machine. It is the recognition of this tendency which causes the opposition, inexplicable to so many people of trades unions, to certain schemes for vocational education. Now, in the folk-school the man is trained much more than his hand. He does become an efficient craftsman, but the craftsmanship is incidental to the development of his manhood.

bread is selling in Canada at the present time. During the past week Montreal bakers have conducted a price-cutting campaign, one baker reducing the pound and a half loaf to 10c, while the remainder of the bakers reduced their prices 1c to 11c for the one and a half pound loaf. While the latter claim that prices are ruinous to their business the former states that he is able to sell his bread on the basis of 10c for the pound and a half loaf without reducing the quality of the bread, owing to the fact that his basis of flour prices is considerably lower than that now ruling. It seems that all the larger bakeries must be in a similar position and their action in basing bread prices on current flour prices is therefore unjustified. The Canadian people are the largest per capita consumers of bread in the world, but in spite of the fact that the country annually has a very large surplus of wheat for export, bread is now selling considerably higher than in England, Australia, and other Allied countries. It seems just that a thorough investigation should be made into the sale of this important commodity.

### THE ADVANCE IN LIVING COST.

The monthly index number of the Department of Labor showing the average wholesale cost of 272 commodities in general use rose during June to 242.7, compared with 240 for May, 183.3 for June of last year, and 135 for June, 1914. In retail prices the average cost of the workingman's budget for the weeks food rose to \$11.89, an advance of 7c over May and of \$3.38 or nearly 40 per cent as compared with June, 1916. The report states further that during the month of June, eggs averaged higher although June is a month of large production. Milk and butter were lower, as also was flour. Meats and rice, fruit and vegetables, textiles, metals, coal and wood show increases.

The report is especially illuminative in view of the O'Connor report on cold storage conditions. The conditions discussed therein call for a most searching investigation. Anything approaching monopoly in the sale of these commodities should be dealt with severely.

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